



China News Summary

March 2009

Compiled by The United Methodist China Program
General Board of Global Ministries
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1335
New York, NY 10115
www.gbgm-umc.org

To receive online notification of the China News Summary, contact DAllen@gbgm-umc.org with <CNS, subscribe> in the subject line

Drought cripples northern China. China is experiencing the worst drought in 50 years. Especially hard hit are the wheat growing regions in the north where provinces like Henan have gone 105 successive days without rain, said China's state news media Xinhua. The Yangtze River (*changjiang*) is also at its lowest in 143 years, reported the BBC. Up to 4.5 million people and 2.5 million cattle lack adequate drinking water. Of particular worry is that nearly 45 percent of the country's wheat is produced in eight of the hardest hit provinces. Of the 27 million acres of planted wheat fields in these provinces, 11.5 million acres of wheat shoots were seriously damaged by drought, said China's Ministry of Agriculture. These eight provinces—Hebei, Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, Henan, Shandong, Shaanxi and Gansu—have been declared 'red-alert' areas which means that the government will give 'top priority' on drought relief work, both immediate (relief aid) and long-term (irrigation canals, water catchments). The immediate cause of the drought is low rainfall since October of last year. Ma Jun, director of the Institute of Public and Environment Affairs added that longer-term causes are because the northern half of China, a naturally dry area, has 40 percent of China's population, more than 50 percent of its arable land, the vast majority of its coal industry, and just 20 percent of its water. Water consumption has soared due to intensive agricultural practices, growing industry, and increased urbanization. As part of its efforts, China has also employed weather manipulation, said the *China Daily*, by launching iodide sticks into the sky to create clouds which induced snowfall. The snows brought moisture to parched lands, said meteorologist Guo Yingchun, but after three days of snow it also led to the closure of 12 main roads in Beijing, said the BBC. China has allocated an immediate 87 billion *yuan* (\$12.5 billion) as subsidies to farmers and earmarked 400 million *yuan* (\$58 million) to local governments for drought relief. ("China lets it snow to end drought," *BBC News*, Feb. 19, 2009; "Yangtze hit by drought in China," *BBC News*, January 17, 2009; "China drought deprives millions of drinking water," *Reuters*, Feb. 7, 2009; "Premier urges 'top priority' on drought relief," *China Daily*, Feb. 8, 2009; "Drought threatens Chinese wheat crop," *Guardian*, Feb. 4, 2009; "Worst drought in half century shrivels the wheat belt of China," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 2009; "Lingering China drought highlights water-saving agriculture," *Xinhua*, Feb. 6, 2009; "Drought relief effort under way," *China Daily*, Feb. 3, 2009)

US Secretary of State pushes economy and climate change on first China visit. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, ended her first overseas tour with a three-day visit to China, focusing on the global economic recovery, climate change, and security issues involving North Korea. Clinton spent a considerable amount of time with her counterpart, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, and also met with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, reported the BBC. The *New York Times* reported Clinton's special envoy on climate change, Todd Stern, saying China and the United States account for 40 percent of the world carbon dioxide emissions. During her visit Clinton urged US-Sino cooperation on clean energy technology. Said Clinton, "The United States and China will build an important partnership to develop and deploy clean energy technologies designed to speed our transformation to low-carbon economies. Areas for useful co-operation include renewable energy, the capture and storage of CO² from coal plants and energy efficiency in our buildings," reported the CBC. Clinton also thanked Foreign Minister Yang for China's continuing confidence in US securities. Beijing currently holds around \$700 billion in US Treasury bonds and its continuation is crucial to helping fund President Obama's \$750+ billion stimulus package. While in China, Clinton also worshipped at Beijing's Haidian Protestant Church, had conversations with Protestant churches leaders at Haidian, and met with the HIV/AIDS activist and octogenarian Ms. Gao Yaojie, as well as a small group of women academics, journalists, and non-governmental organization leaders at the United States embassy. The US Secretary of State ended her visit by engaging in a web chat with the *China Daily*, the state-run English language newspaper, said the BBC. ("Clinton paints China policy with a green hue," *New York Times*, Feb 22, 2009; "Clinton seeks consensus with China on tackling global economic woes," *Guardian*, Feb. 21, 2009; "Clinton urges stronger China ties," *BBC News*, Feb. 21, 2009; "Clinton wraps up first Asian visit," *BBC News*, Feb. 22, 2009; "Clinton urges US-China cooperation on clean energy," *CBC*, Feb. 21, 2009; "China and US breathe sigh of relief," *AsiaNews*, Feb. 23, 2009)

NCCUSA delegation warmly welcomed by China's Protestant church leaders. A delegation from the National Council of Churches USA made a fourth official visit to the China Christian Council (CCC) and National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (TSPM) since relationships were established in 1979. H.E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, president and general secretary respectively, visited with the Rev. Gao Feng, CCC president and Elder Fu Xianwei, national chair of the TSPM. The two sides celebrated its ecumenical relationships guided by the self-supporting, self-administrating, and self-evangelizing nature of Protestant churches in China today. Citing new US-Sino cooperation on climate change, Kinnamon affirmed that "as churches we can encourage this process of political collaboration by joining our voices in defense of God's creation," said an NCCUSA press release. The NCCUSA and CCC plan to share materials and provide education on ecological concerns. Kinnamon said the NCCUSA also looks forward to the second US visit of the Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Church in China to Washington and Dallas in the near future. It pledged to advertise the event through its member constituencies. The Bible Ministry Exhibition calls attention to the reality of the Christian community in China and emphasizes shared commitments to biblical study and translation, the NCC affirmed. The Rev. Gao Feng, president of the CCC, was an NCCUSA-sponsored theological student in the early 1990s at Lutheran Seminary, St. Paul, MN. Gao's study was partially funded by a grant from the General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church. The 2009 NCCUSA visit was financed by the Common Global Ministries (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. ("*NCC leaders warmly received by Chinese church leaders,*" NCCUSA, March 4, 2009)

China human rights record reviewed at United Nations. China's human rights positions came under United Nations scrutiny and review for the first time in a decade. The newly formed 47-member Human Rights Council created the Universal Periodic Review which is tasked with examining the human rights records of each United Nations member every four years. The review consists of a report by the country being examined and a two-minute opportunity for countries and organizations to pose questions and/or make recommendations to the country being reviewed. The Chinese document focused on improvements brought out by economic reforms and acknowledged areas of great challenge. China sees human rights linked to education, poverty alleviation, health care reform, and rising life expectancy. The Chinese ambassador to the United Nations, Li Baodong, said China has: enacted nearly 250 laws relating to the protection of human rights since 1978 and a system of grassroots self-government; ruled that death sentence appeals are to be heard by open courts; affirmed that torture is illegal; encouraged NGO involvement in human rights issues including poverty alleviate and health care; and assured investments in protecting religious practices and ethnic minority cultural identities. Dozens of countries engaged in the feedback which included: encouragement for China's improvement of human rights concerns (Pakistan); praise for the fulfillment of poverty reduction targets set by the UN Millennium Development Goals (Angolia); encouragement for the continuation of the reform/abolition of education through labor practice (Sudan); support for banning the use of forced labor (New Zealand); support for the inclusion of a legal definition of discrimination into its Constitution (Portugal); the insistence of ethnic and religious minorities rights (Australia); the development of policies that prohibit child labor (Finland). A full draft of the UN proceedings related to the People's Republic of China can be found at: http://china.usc.edu/App_Images/un-hrc-china-review-2009.pdf. The Human Rights Council came into existence in 2006; the United States was one of four countries (out of nearly 180) that voted against the formation of a new Council on the basis that it included the most aggressive human rights violators. The United States position will be revisited by President Barak Obama, said the *Christian Science Monitor*. ("*China tells United Nations it protects human rights,* Reuters, Feb. 9, 2009; "*China defends human rights record at UN review,*" CBC, Feb. 9, 2009; "*China faces unprecedented UN human rights scrutiny,*" *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 9, 2009; "*General Assembly established Human Rights Council, United Nations,* March 15, 2006; "*China submits rights record to UN,*" BBC News, Feb. 9, 2009)

HIV/AIDS is now the number one infectious disease in China. The Chinese Ministry of Health has announced that HIV/AIDS now claims more lives in China than any other infectious disease, topping tuberculosis and rabies, reported the *Independent*. This figure is five times higher than previous ones reported by the Ministry of Health. A possible factor for the significant increase could be the Chinese government's improved reporting of HIV/AIDS statistics in recent years, said the Associated Press. According to the government and UNAIDS there are now 700,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS on the China mainland. Since Premier Wen Jiabao's landmark public handshake with hospitalized AIDS patients in 2003, the Chinese government has focused on curbing the spread of the HIV virus and dispelling social discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS, affirmed Xinhua. The government has campaigned for

'100 percent condom use' and in 2003 initiated the "four frees, one care" campaign: free HIV testing, free counseling and treatment for rural regions, free medication for all pregnant HIV carriers, and free education for AIDS orphans. GBGM partners, the China Christian Council and the Amity Foundation have initiated between them hundreds of HIV/AIDS training classes in churches throughout China, and encouraged a number of innovative local educational programs including a rock band, the Garden of Love, in Yunnan province, that performed at a many village and town fairs. (*"Too little, too late as China's AIDS death rate explodes," Independent, Feb. 19, 2009; "AIDS becomes China's deadliest infectious disease," Associated Press, Feb. 18, 2009; "AIDS takes deadly toll in China," BBC News, Feb. 18, 2009; United Methodist China Program*)

China looks to Saudi Arabia for jobs and energy. China's President Hu Jintao met with monarch of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz, in Riyadh which saw the two states deepen relationships over energy issues, infrastructure, and jobs. As China's economic development continues, Saudi Arabia has become China's largest single oil supplier, said the BBC. And, as China faces a new class of unemployed due to the global economic downturn and factory closings, President Hu is looking to secure Chinese cooperation in Saudi infrastructure projects which would draw Chinese migrant workers to the region and help reduce unemployment on China's mainland. During President Hu's visit he signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia to assist with the building of a high-speed rail system enabling faster transportation for Hajj pilgrims. The train would link Mecca with Medina, Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah. According to Xinhua, in 2008 Saudi Arabia had given a cash donation of US\$50 million for earthquake relief following the 8.0 Richter scale disaster in Sichuan province and an additional US\$10 million in materials. Hu's last visit to Saudi Arabia was in 2006. (*"China seeks to bolster Saudi ties," BBC News, Feb. 10, 2009; "Chinese, Saudi Arabian leaders pledge to deepen ties," Xinhua, Feb 11, 2009; "China to build Mecca rail system," BBC News, Feb. 11, 2009; "Hu's visit boots ties with Saudi Arabia, GCC," China Daily, Feb 11, 2009*)

China Hu cements broader ties with African nations. President Hu Jintao paid state visits to Mali, Tanzania, Senegal and Mauritius, countries that the Chinese government was keen to point out were not known for rich natural resources said the BBC. It is widely thought that Hu's visit to the Africa continent, his fourth, was purposely focused to counterbalance the image of China as a resource grabber or 21st century colonizer, an image painted by critics of China's human rights policies. The accusations involve China's many bilateral cooperations which include the extraction of minerals and oil from resource-rich African nations like the Sudan, Zambia, Nigeria, and the Congo, in return for a no strings attached attitude toward aid, which critics says ignores human rights issues. Although African nations suffer from declining western aid and investment from the global economic downturn, China's Assistant Foreign Minister, Zhai Jun, said that China has promised to maintain its aid and investment in Africa and that it will not renege on its promise to waive the debts owed by many of Africa's poorer countries, said Xinhua. While in Africa President Hu opened a 60,000 seat stadium in Tanzania built mostly with Chinese government grants; announced the construction of 10 women's centers in Mali, a hospital in Mali's capital, Bamako, and laid the first brick in a bridge to span the Niger River. China is Africa's third largest trading partner. (*"China to maintain aid to Africa," Xinhua, Feb. 6, 2009; "China's Hu grants aid to Tanzania," BBC News, Feb 15, 2009; "Chinese president says African visit produces new consensus," Xinhua, Feb 15, 2009; "Chinese president to start African tour," AFP, Feb. 12, 2009*)

Latin America: a potential market for China. In an effort to strengthen ties within the Latin American region, two top Chinese officials, Vice-President Xi Jinping and Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu engaged in visits to nine Latin American countries. The visits were seen as a pro-active way to cultivate new global markets amidst the impact of the global economic downturn, said the BBC. It is rare that two top-level officials travel at once. Xi visited Jamaica, Columbia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico. Hui traveled to Argentina, Ecuador, Barbados and the Bahamas. Because North American and European markets have shrunk considerably in the last year, China is looking to new regions for its export market, said the BBC. . The diplomatic tours of Mr. Xi and Mr. Hui also have deeper geopolitical implications said the *New York Times*. Compared to other economies, China has cash reserves which it can use to foster Latin American relations in an age of waning United States influence. By visiting smaller nations like Jamaica, Barbados and the Bahamas, China wants to show it will not abandon the needs of smaller nations or those with less influence, a theme echoed by President Hu Jintao's near simultaneous visit to five African nations not known for their minerals or oil, reported the BBC. In Venezuela, China signed a \$12 billion investment fund to be used for education, infrastructure, agriculture, and health care programs. China is Latin American's third largest trading partner next to the United States and the European Union. (*"China set to boost Venezuela ties," BBC, Feb. 17, 2009; "China and Venezuela boost links," BBC News, Feb 19, 2009; "Beijing seeks Latin trade ties," New York Times, Feb. 16, 2009; "Chinese vice premier concludes Latin American tour," China Daily Feb. 20, 2009; "Chinese vice president hails ties with Latin America," Xinhua, Feb 18, 2009*)

Beijing to lend antiquities to Taipei for exhibition. Beijing will lend 29 Qing Dynasty (1616-1911) relics for a three-month display in Taiwan, the first time such an exchange has happened since the end of China's civil war 60 years ago. The artifacts are from the imperial reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1722-1735) and will be taken from Beijing's Palace Museum (Forbidden City) to be displayed at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, said the BBC. The director of Taipei's National Palace Museum told reporters in Beijing, "We have realized how sincere the mainland has been in inviting us to every corner of the Forbidden City." Taipei has not agreed to a reciprocal loan to Beijing for fear the relics may be retained by Beijing because of historic sensitivities, said the *Guardian*. In 1949 when the Guomindang, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, fled to the island of Taiwan, it took nearly 650,000 pieces of antiquities from the mainland, many from the Beijing's National Palace. Present-day relationships between Beijing and Taipei have improved considerably since Taiwan's March 2008 presidential election of Ma Ying-jeou, an advocate of the 'one-China' policy. ("*Chinese treasurers to be reunited in Taiwan,*" *The Guardian*, Feb 20, 2009; "*China to lend treasures to Taiwan,*" *BBC News*, Feb. 16, 2009)

China refutes US human rights report, issues its own for the United States. China reacted strongly and swiftly to the recently released annual US State Department report *2008 Human Rights Report: China*. The report was published just days after the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to China where critics were disappointed to see an emphasis on human rights take back seat to the global economic and climate change crises. The US State Department's report says that China has stepped up repression on the ethnic populations of Xinjiang and Xixang (Tibet) Autonomous Regions and continues to limit citizen's rights to privacy, freedom of speech, right to assembly and freedom of association. China hit back with a detailed report of violations of human rights in the United States. China's report said there were 1.4 million violent crimes in the United States in 2008 resulting in 17,000 murders and 9.8 million property crimes. Over 1.35 million high school students were threatened or injured by a weapon on school premises. The report cited US government surveillance of Internet activities, legislation giving authorities greater freedoms to wire-tap, and an increase in cases of abuse by law enforcement authorities. Of women receiving emergency medical treatment, one third of the treatments are due to domestic violence, said the report. It also quoted the US Bureau of Census that in 2007, 12.5 percent of Americans lived below the poverty line, up from 2006, and that the United States is one of the few countries in the world where minors can receive the same criminal punishments as adults. The United States "is the only country in the world that sentences children to life in prison without the possibility of parole or release," said the report. The Chinese report also said the war in Iraq has killed more than one million civilians, injured the same amount and is the world's largest seller of armaments. In response to the report, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton replied, "I think we'll have a full dialogue with the Chinese on all areas" of policy, said the *New York Times*. The full text of *Human Rights in the United States 2008* can be viewed at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-02/26/content_10904741.htm. The full text of the US State Department's *2008 Human Rights Report: China* report can be found on <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>. ("*China hits back with report on U.S. human rights record,*" *Xinhua*, Feb. 26, 2009; "*China hits back at criticism on human rights,*" *Telegraph*, Feb 27, 2009; "*China says U.S. distorts facts in report on rights,*" *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2009)

Hongkong home for Mugabe? Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president, allegedly has bought a \$5.7 million three story home in the Tai Po area of Hongkong's New Territories. Mugabe denies the purchase, saying that he and his wife, Grace, rent the building for Mugabe's 20-year old daughter, Bona, who is thought to be studying at a Hongkong university, said the *Zimbabwe Times*. *Time* has reported that western governments and Australia prohibit members of Mugabe's family from enrolling in universities and may be turning to Asia as an alternative. The Tai Po residence, should it belong to Mugabe, is thought to be a 'bolthole' in the event that Mugabe must exit Zimbabwe quickly, according to the *Times Online*. Zimbabwe suffers from a 231 million percent inflation rate, 94 percent unemployment, and over 3,000 dead from a recent cholera epidemic, says AFP quoting United Nations' statistics. ("*Found: Robert Mugabe's secret bolthole in the far east,*" *Times Online*, Feb. 15, 2009; "*Mugabe says property rented for Bona,*" *Zimbabwe Times*, Feb. 26, 2009; "*Mugabe's home away from Hong Kong,*" *Time*, Feb. 23, 2009; "*231 million percent, Zimbabwe dumps currency,*" *Sydney Morning Herald*, Jan. 30, 2009)

Chinese hostage released by Taliban. A Chinese engineer was released by the Taliban after five months of captivity. Mr. Long Xiaowei and another captive, Mr. Zhang Guo, initially escaped but Long injured his ankle leading to his recapture, said the *China Daily*. He was allowed no change of clothing, ate

course food, and was confined to one room, Long told Chinese reporters. When a tunnel connecting Long's room collapsed, the Taliban thinking he was dead, were surprised to find him alive. He was subsequently driven 10 hours and released into Pakistani police care. A Pakistani driver and guard captured at the same time as the two Chinese were also released said the BBC. ("Freed engineer tells of Taliban ordeal," *China Daily*, Feb. 16, 2009; "Taleban release Chinese engineer," *BBC News*, Feb. 15, 2009)

Links and frequent sources

Agence France-Presse	www.afp.com
Amnesty International	www.amnesty.org
Amity Foundation	www.amityfoundation.org
Associated Press	www.ap.org
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)	www.bbc.co.uk
Beijing Review	www.bjreview.com.cn
China Christian Council	www.ccctspm.org
China Daily	www.chinadaily.com.cn
China Development Brief	www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com
China Dialogue	http://www.chinadialogue.net/
China Institute	www.chinainstitute.org
China.org.cn	www.china.org.cn
Christian Science Monitor	www.csmonitor.com
CNN	www.cnn.com
Deutsche Presse-Agentur	http://www.dpa.de/en/unternehmenswelt/index.html
Economist	www.economist.com
Ecumenical News Service	www.eni.ch/
Embassy of the PRC in the USA	www.china-embassy.org
General Board of Global Ministries, UMC	www.gbqm-umc.org
Guardian	www.guardian.co.uk
International Herald Tribune	www.iht.com
Jinde Charities	www.jinde.org
Los Angeles Times	www.latimes.com
National Public Radio	www.npr.org
New York Times	www.nytimes.com
People's Daily Online	http://english.people.com.cn/
Reuters	www.reuters.com
South China Morning Post	www.scmp.com
Times	www.timesonline.co.uk
UCAN News	www.ucanews.com
United Methodist China Program	http://new.gbqm-umc.org/connections/partnerships/chinaprogram/
United States Catholic China Bureau	www.usccb.net
Washington Post	www.washingtonpost.com
Xinhua News Agency	www.xinhuanet.com

The United Methodist China Program seeks to facilitate deeper understandings between China, the United States and other nations throughout God's world. It respects the autonomy of Protestant churches in China and recognizes that, with God's guidance, Christians in China are shaping a bold new witness. The United Methodist China Program relies on partner organizations like the China Christian Council to help it define new relationships within China's post-denominational context. Another partner organization is the Amity Foundation, a Chinese social service organization initiated by Christians in China to make Christian participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people. Through education, communication, and exchange, China Program is a sensitive lens through which we and people within China can see and understand each other more accurately. The China News Summary is prepared by Diane Allen, a GBGM missionary serving as China Program Associate.